



God's Love in Action

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by Caritas Singapore Young Adults Committee

Enacting Our Faith: Living Out Catholic Social Teaching In Our World Today

Feb 2020

Part 1: Our World Today

CNA Insider

Why in a cheap food paradise, some Singaporeans are still going hungry

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/cnainsider/food-insecurity-singapore-hunger-poverty-12438646>

https://youtu.be/PQaVds_uFDY

Pulling together in creative ways, to better feed food insecure Singaporeans

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/cnainsider/food-insecurity-hunger-singapore-charity-donations-taskforce-12460350>

<https://youtu.be/dLVSKx8WI70>

Summary of the Articles

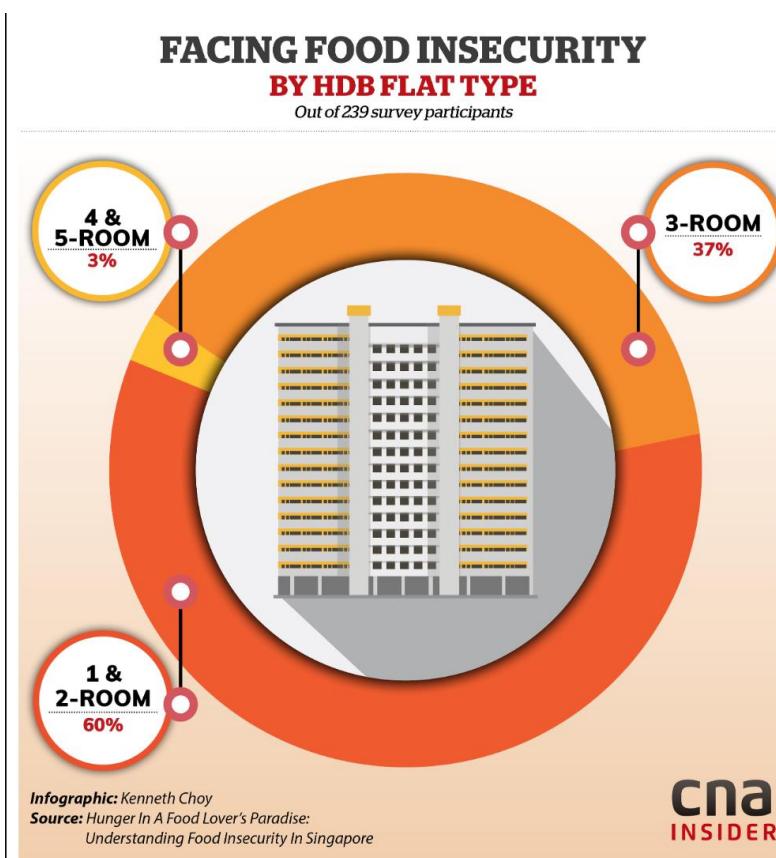
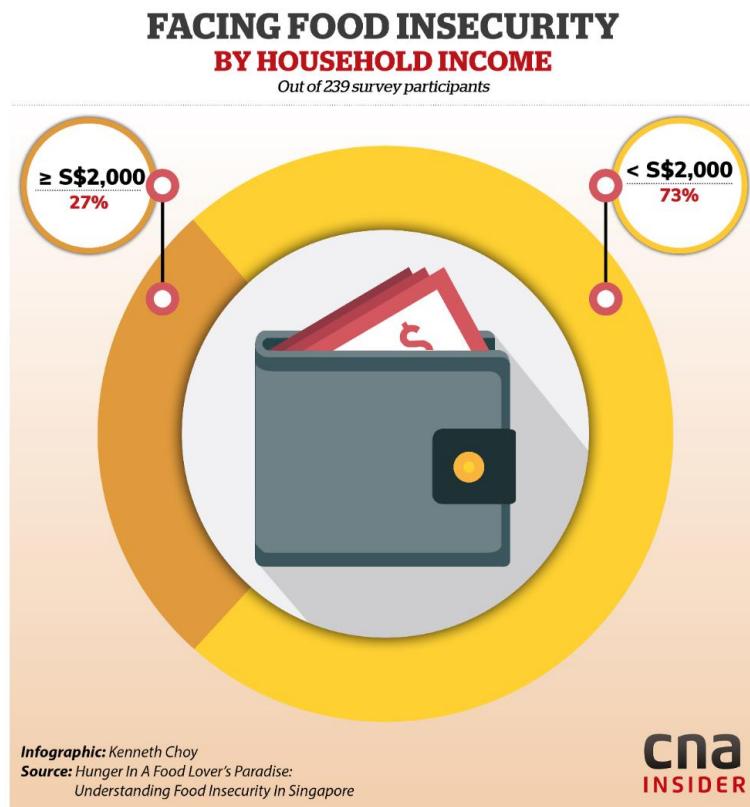
What is food insecurity?

- To be severely food insecure means not knowing where your next meal is coming from, having to skip one, or even go an entire day without eating.
- But more generally, food insecurity refers to the lack of access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food, due to financial or physical constraints.

Who are the food insecure in Singapore?

- Some 4.1 per cent of Singaporeans faced moderate to severe food insecurity between 2016 and 2018
- They are a surprisingly diverse group: One that can't be defined by housing type, family size, age, or income group alone.

- "We often think people who stay in larger flats don't need financial assistance since they could afford a big flat," he said. "But many of them might be just one retrenchment or one serious illness away from a tight financial situation."
- Families who are working hard yet still struggle to put food on the table are common among the food-insecure.



What are the consequences of food insecurity?

- The typical diet of a person who is food insecure – processed meals high in carbohydrates and sodium, low on nutritional value – puts them at higher risk of obesity, diabetes, cardiac disease, and other chronic illnesses.
- In the long run, the cost of this is also borne by the country in the form of increased public healthcare spending.
- Children who experienced food insecurity in their first five years of life were more likely to be lagging behind in social, emotional and, to some degree, cognitive skills.
- When resources are scarce for adults, it can affect the ability to make decisions or see the bigger picture – for example, planning to get a better job. Attention is focused on immediate needs, like what food to put on the table, while the stress of having to worry about this day after day can reduce bandwidth for long-term planning.

Do governmental welfare schemes help?

- “The reality is that many households either don’t know about the welfare schemes, so they won’t come forward; or they may feel embarrassed about identifying themselves, because of the stigma associated with seeking help.”
- Several families brought up the frustration of applying for aid at the SSO or bigger welfare organisations - the need to need to fill up multiple forms, and to apply for renewal of assistance every few months with the re-submission of documentation.

Charities plugging the gap

- There are some 125 food support organisations with an online presence, according to the Lien Centre study, and they range from non-profits and Institutions of a Public Character (IPC), soup kitchens and Meals-On-Wheels providers, to informal ground-up groups.
- But the ultimate goal for the volunteers is to help the family become self-reliant. “Sending food can’t be a long-term solution,” Fion pointed out.

Reflect/Think:

- What emotions came to the fore as I read this article or watched the video?
- Which parts of the article struck you? Sit with them and allow the Spirit to reveal why and how they struck you. Ask the Spirit for the grace of self-awareness, to show you how these thoughts and feelings reflect you as a person.

Part 2: Our Faith – Catholic Social Teaching

Which principles of Catholic Social Teaching are related to food insecurity?

- Principle of the Universal Destination of Goods
- Principle of Solidarity

1) Principle of the Universal Destination of Goods

- God intended for all the world's resources to be enjoyed by everyone, and not just a few. God destined the earth and all it contains for all men and all peoples so that all created things would be shared fairly by all mankind under the guidance of justice tempered by charity.
- Each person must have access to the level of well-being necessary for his full development. We should have a preferential option for the poor and see to it that the most vulnerable also have what they need.

RICH MAN, POOR MAN

In the first of a series of articles on money and Catholic Social Teachings, we look at what the Church says about wealth and poverty.

The Catholic Church has always been concerned about the poor and cares deeply for them. Its emphasis on the poor has led some to say that the Church over-romanticises poverty and spurns wealth.

At first glance, the Bible seems to teach that wealth is wrong for Christians. After all, there were many instances when Jesus himself took a very strong stand against the rich.

In Luke 6:24, Jesus says: "But woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation." In Matthew 19:24, He says "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (see box). In Luke 16:19-26, Jesus tells the story of the poor man Lazarus who was suffering at the gates of the rich man. He tells how "the poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom" while the rich man was tormented in hell.

The lives led by our clergy and religious reinforce the view that the Church emphasises poverty rather than wealth. Most religious orders, including the Dominicans, Franciscans and Carmelites, take a vow of poverty in addition to vows of celibacy and obedience. Their promises are made as part of their religious profession. While diocesan priests do not take an explicit vow of poverty, they lead a simple and modest life.

So, does the Church glorify poverty and encourage Catholics to be poor so that we have a better

chance of gaining a place in heaven? Far from it.

A closer reading of the passages of Luke 6, Matthew 19 and Luke 16 shows that Jesus is not glorifying the poor but repeatedly warning against greed and the reliance on material possessions. He warns those who have the means – and these are not only the rich – and yet ignore the poor, especially those without the most basic of needs.

We can draw three attitudes about wealth from the Bible.

First, wealth in itself is not condemned. In Genesis, God blessed Abraham with land, progeny and blessings (*Genesis 22:17-18*). Jesus himself did not spurn the wealthy. He dined with the rich tax collector Zacchaeus who later repented, repaid his sins fourfold and gave half his property to the poor (*Luke 19:1-10*). Jesus came to save all, rich and poor.

Secondly, when wealthy people in the Bible were condemned, they were condemned because of the means by which their riches were acquired or used, not for the riches themselves. This is seen in the warnings from the prophets like Amos, who warned of wealth obtained through oppression or fraud (*Amos 4:11*), and wealth of merchants derived from wantonness (*Revelation 18:3*).

Thirdly, our individual attitude towards wealth matters. We should be concerned about the effect wealth can have on our lives since it tempts us to forget about God who is our true provider. Furthermore, it is not

God's way that we should desire wealth, to flaunt wealth or be tied to it. The Bible tells us "not to store up treasures on earth, where moth and woodworm destroy them and thieves can break in and steal" (*Matthew 6:19-20*). Instead, we are to store our treasures in heaven.

The Catholic Church teaches that wealth exists to be shared. In Catholic Social Teachings, this is known as the Principle of the Universal Destination of Goods: "Goods even when earned honestly always have a universal destination; any type of improper accumulation or hoarding is immoral, because it openly contradicts the intention by the Creator that all goods are meant for everyone, rich or poor" (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 328).

We should therefore consider ourselves administrators and not owners of the goods that God has entrusted to us.

How should wealth be shared? We are asked to put the needs of society's most poor and vulnerable members first among all other social concerns; they are the ones who are often neglected and often do not have a say in their own welfare or have the means to improve their own lives.

This is what the Social Teachings' "preferential option for the poor" is about. The poor and vulnerable are not only those without money, but also those who are deprived of their basic rights or of equal participation in society.

As Catholics and stewards of

Is wealth a bad thing?

Jesus takes a strong stand against the rich many times. But what is He saying to us? Here's what the Bible tells us:

- Firstly, wealth in itself is not condemned. Jesus came to save all, rich and poor.
- Secondly, when wealthy people are condemned in the Bible, it is because of how they acquired or used their riches.
- Thirdly, our attitude to wealth matters. Wealth can tempt us to forget God, our true provider. We should not desire wealth to flaunt it or be tied to it.

God's resources, we are called to reach out to the poor by sharing what God has blessed us with. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus illustrates how a complete stranger provided for the needs of another person. We are called to do the same.

We can use our wealth to help the poor to meet their basic needs in life, or provide care for orphans or the elderly, or even grant job opportunities to the marginalised. We can also use our gifts and abilities to help the poor break out of the cycle of poverty. Educators, for example, can render literacy and remedial programmes for the poor.

Indeed, how can we do good works without money? As St Clement of Alexandria puts it: "How could we ever do good to our neighbour if none of us possessed anything?"

So, with wealth, comes the responsibility to use it properly, to be fruitful for God's purposes.

2) Principle of Solidarity

- Every human person is connected to every other person. We are called to stand together as one human family.

WHY SHOULD CATHOLICS HELP THE POOR?



by Fr David Garcia

Because this is the core of the Church's mission.

A society that wants to develop healthily must practice the principle of solidarity. This principle tells us that we should take responsibility for each other and stand in solidarity with those who need help the most, especially the poor and disadvantaged.

The Church always shows a special concern for the poor, and in recent documents she refers to this concern as a "preferential option for the poor".

"The preferential option for the poor should be reaffirmed in all its force."

(St. John Paul II, Puebla 1979 in Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church #182)

The Church therefore does not consider the concern for the poor an optional act for those who want to go the extra mile. As a matter of fact, Pope St. Gregory the Great warned not to confuse mercy with justice regarding care for the poor: "When we attend to the needs of those in want, we give them what is theirs, not ours. More than performing works of mercy, we are paying a debt of justice. ... what is already due in justice is not to be offered as a gift of charity" (St. Gregory the Great in Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church #184).

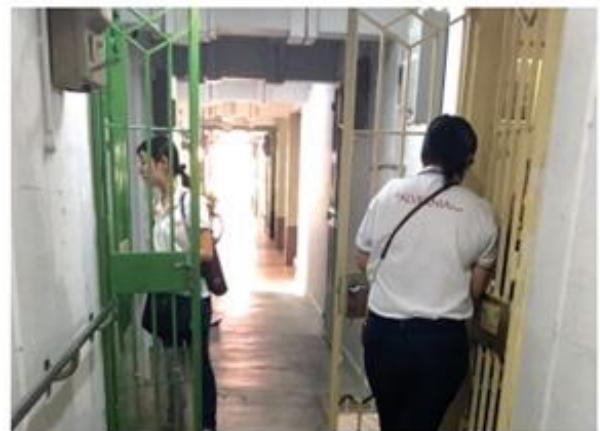


Photo: Mount Alvernia Hospital

St. John Paul II also considered poverty a matter of justice: "Poverty poses a dramatic problem of justice in its various forms and with its various effects, it is characterized by an unequal growth that does not recognize the 'equal right of all people to take their seat at the table for the common banquet'." (Solicitude Rei Socialis, #33)

God is love. It is in the nature of love to prefer those who need love most. If a mother has five children and one of them is often sick and in need of care, to which of her children is she going to care first and foremost? Obviously, the one who needs care most.

Jesus showed his preference for the poor, the sick and the sinners. And so should the Church of Jesus.

The preferential option of the Church for the poor is not optional, and not only a matter of social justice. It is a sign of her reflection of the love of God.

And this is why, as Catholics, we should help the poor. It is our identity as Catholics.

Reflect:

- Do I find myself trying to ignore these issues or perhaps wanting to stand in solidarity with my fellow brothers and sisters but not quite knowing how?
- Standing in solidarity with those facing food insecurity could mean listening to their stories with an open mind and heart, withholding judgement. Am I able to create such a mental and emotional space to "be one with" them?
- The principle of the universal destination of goods comes from the virtue of justice, which seeks out what is fair and right. How willing am I to give of what I have in order to pursue justice?

Pray:

God, you have given all peoples on common origin.
It is your will that they be gathered together
as one family in yourself.
Fill the hearts of humankind with the fire of your love
and with the desire to ensure justice for all.
By sharing the good things you give us,
may we secure an equality for all
our brothers and sisters throughout the world.
May there be an end to division, strife, and war.
May there be a dawning of a truly human society
built on love and peace.
We ask this in your name. Amen.

Enacting Our Faith: Take Action

Take a step to better understand the needs and challenges of the poor in our nation.
For example, reach out, have a conversation and accompany the members of the St Vincent de Paul Society in your parish in their care for their Friends in Need (FINs).

Decide on a small step that you can take to offer a small gesture of help to those in your workplaces or neighbourhood who you know are struggling with food security challenges.

Discuss with your fellow young adult friends on how all of you can reach out to other young adults in your parish to help them better understand the situation, reflect on how young adults can better get involved in the social mission of the church.

We can also choose to donate and help in the following ways:

HOW YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE

Supporting our Catholic Charities on NTUC Shop and Donate efforts:

1) Boys' Town

(<https://donate.fairprice.com.sg/VwoDisplayView?catalogId=10201&storeId=10151#boys'Town>)

2) Canossaville Children & Community Services

(<https://donate.fairprice.com.sg/VwoDisplayView?catalogId=10201&storeId=10151#canossavilleChildren&CommServices>)

3) Montfort Care

(<https://donate.fairprice.com.sg/VwoDisplayView?catalogId=10201&storeId=10151#montfortCare>)

4) Marymount Centre

(<https://donate.fairprice.com.sg/VwoDisplayView?catalogId=10201&storeId=10151#marymountCentre>)

Supporting other Charities:

Food From The Heart: To volunteer, visit <https://www.foodfromtheheart.sg> or WhatsApp 81280432

Food Bank Singapore: To donate, visit <https://www.giving.sg/the-food-bank-singapore-ltd>

Free Food For All: To donate or volunteer, visit <https://freefood.org.sg>

National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre: To volunteer or donate to various COVID-19 charity efforts, visit <https://www.giving.sg/sgunited>

TOUCH Community Services: To volunteer for Meals-On-Wheels delivery, call 68046565

Willing Hearts: To volunteer, visit <http://www.willinghearts.org.sg>